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THE DICKENS-KOLLE LETTERS

In One Volume

ONE hundred complimentary copies of this work have been printed by The Bibliophile Society for Mr. Harry B. Smith, for private distribution, after the regular membership copies were printed. The type has been distributed.

To Ariel.

Some Saints there are who roar and cry,
and rave and scream and bawl
To free some Spirit throned on high
To bless them with a call;
But though they sue on kindred knee
That Spirit's deaf and dumb. —
oh Spirit if you called on me,
How very soon I'd come!

October 25th 1838.

THE EARLIEST LETTERS

OF

CHARLES DICKENS

(WRITTEN TO HIS FRIEND HENRY KOLLE)

EDITED BY

HARRY B. SMITH

FOR PRIVATE DISTRIBUTION ONLY

PRINTED BY
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
CAMBRIDGE MASSACHUSETTS
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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

By Henry H. Harper

At the time of the issue (in 1908) of the volume of the Dickens-Beadnell Correspondence, containing Professor Baker's footnote calling attention to another collection of early Dickens letters that changed hands in Birmingham, England, about ten years ago, it was hardly to be hoped or believed that within a year these letters should be located here in the United States, and in the hands of a generous Bibliophile, who not only expressed an eager willingness to share their contents with his fellow-booklovers, but also offered to edit and arrange them for the press, which he has done in a scholarly and highly entertaining and instructive manner. Mr. Harry B. Smith, of New York, the present owner of this collection of letters written by Dickens to his friend Kolle, has in the following pages related by what a narrow margin the Dickens-Beadnell episode escaped being exploited in public print before the advent of the recent Bibliophile edition of the letters from Dickens to

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Maria Beadnell-Winter. It will be remembered that Kolle, in addition to looking after his own interests in wooing a fair member of the Beadnell household, served young Dickens in the capacity of messenger in smuggling his imploring love missives through the parental barriers and into the hands of the coquettish Maria, after Dickens had been debarred from the Beadnell home, and even from communicating with Miss Beadnell through the mail. Nothing could better illustrate the corroborative character of these letters than the quotation appearing on pages 13–15.

Matters of an intimately personal nature which disclose important facts and give a clearer insight into the lives and characters of those who are near and dear to us are always interesting. Perhaps no author excels Dickens in the ever-increasing number of admirers he has made among the lovers of literature; and facts, therefore, which relate to and explain the all-absorbing event of his life, and which, according to his own confession to Mrs. Winter, were the inceptive cause of his famous career, cannot fail to be of interest. Any new autobiographical material of this nature may be justly regarded as a valuable

contribution to literature, and, as such, is worthy of preservation in an enduring form.

There are a number of causes which co-operate to make this series of letters of unusual interest to readers of Dickens. Noteworthy among its attractive features is the facility with which Mr. Smith has brought out the full significance of every point in its relation to the principal episode, and to a better knowledge of the character and early struggles of the author. Letters,—which if printed disconnectedly would appear inconsequential,—are carefully woven into the complete fabric, and in the remarks interposed by Mr. Smith their relative importance and meanings—oftentimes more or less obscure to the casual reader—are made so clear and comprehensive as to render every letter an important link in the story. It would have been impossible for anyone other than a careful student and admirer of Dickens to have extracted from these letters and given to the reader so much that is new, important and interesting alike to readers and collectors of that author's works.

Apart from its direct connection with the contents of the Dickens-Beadnell volume,

this book has a distinct value of its own; but as a coincidental issue, each supplements and lends interest to the other.

It appears inconceivable that the correspondence of one so full of literary vitality and social proclivities, as was Dickens in his youth and early manhood, could have been confined to one or two individuals. As reporter on a London daily paper he was brought into daily contact with all sorts of companionable men, both young and old, and there must have been others than Kolle with whom he was on terms of equal intimacy, and with whom he occasionally exchanged letters. Though not born with a golden spoon in his mouth, Dickens may be said to have been born with a pen in his hand, which he kept almost constantly in service. In his reportorial days his acquaintance must have been widely extended, and in his biographies we find references to his "many warm friends;" but strangely enough, they reveal no names which would serve as a clue to definite facts with regard to the formative period in the life of the great novelist. Almost without exception the writers of his memoirs jump abruptly from the blacking warehouse experiences to

the period when as assistant and companion to his father he was reporting the parliamentary debates for the *Daily Chronicle*. It is not impossible that there still exists an uncovered wealth of Dickensiana in the form of early letters which may in due time come before the public; and yet it is easy to understand why his early letters may have been destroyed by those who received them, for the reason that at that time no one suspected him of undeveloped greatness, and even his closest friends would not be likely to encumber their files with his letters, which had no apparent value. In fact it is a matter of astonishment that any of them should have been preserved; hence the great value of the very few that are known to exist. That the letters of a scorned and rejected suitor should have been carefully cherished by the frivolous girl to whom they were addressed — and upon whom they seem to have made no impression — is a miracle bordering on the supernatural; but now that another group of contemporary letters bearing directly upon the same affair has come to light, the coincidence is so strange as to appear unreal. Truth is indeed "stranger than fiction."

Even in the face of the contrary views of

Professor Baker, in the Dickens-Beadnell Correspondence, and of Mr. Smith, in the present volume, I am forced to adhere to my former conviction that Mary Anne Leigh was never in love with Dickens, and that the part she acted in "throwing herself in his way" was prompted only by one of two purposes: either that she herself wished to experience the sensation of toying with the ardent young lover at the end of her line, or else that, in the interest of her friend, she was merely endeavoring to provide for her the usual excuse of a clever coquette when trying to shake off a suitor of whom she has grown tired. Young Dickens was too devoutly in love with Maria Beadnell to become interested in any other flirt, and he refused to be shaken off so easily. Determination was always his strong suit, and it is gratifying to know that it won for him in literature what it failed to accomplish in love-making. Mr. Smith points out the fact that Miss Leigh was a cleverer girl than Maria Beadnell, which only confirms the view that she would not have allowed herself to indulge in anything more serious than a sham flirtation with an unpromising youth whom her friend and companion was doing her best to get rid

of. A clever young lady of Miss Leigh's type is not usually found playing second fiddle to one of inferior accomplishments, in the pursuit of a rejected lover. Mr. Smith thinks that Maria Beadnell's coldness may have been due to "Dickens' attentions to Mary Anne Leigh." If Miss Beadnell had seriously cared for Dickens, the fact that her friend was trying to win him away from her would have caused her to redouble her efforts to hold him, instead of "freezing" him out; and in addition, would perhaps have broken off the friendship between the two girls. Mr. Smith admits that the girls probably got together and had a good laugh at Dickens' expense after it was all over. However, differences of opinion must always exist, and after all perhaps it is best merely to present the facts and leave the judicial functions to the reader. Therefore, in the language of the lawyer, I rest the case on the evidence.

THE DICKENS-KOLLE LETTERS

EDITED BY HARRY B. SMITH

IN that valuable contribution to modern biography, *Charles Dickens and Maria Beadnell. Private Correspondence*, Professor George Pierce Baker, who performed the editorial work in a manner deserving the gratitude of every lover of Dickens, remarks: —

"It is reported that some ten years ago a series of letters from Dickens to the friend of his youth, Henry Kolle, changed hands in Birmingham, England. The present editor hopes that the publication of the letters in this book may bring this set to light, for they should supplement and explain the letters here given."

The letters referred to by Professor Baker are those contained in the present volume. They were unknown to Forster, who ignores Kolle even as he disregards several other close friends of Dickens. In some instances Forster quarreled with men who were known and

liked by his great friend, and this led to the omission of their names from the biography; though this was not the case with Kolle, whose intimacy with Dickens ceased at about the time the famous friendship with Forster began. No reference is made to Kolle by either James Payn or Robert Langton in the monographs on Dickens' early life. This correspondence, however, tells its own story of confidence and comradeship.

It cannot be claimed for the letters in the present volume that they equal the Beadnell correspondence in emotional sentiment or in what may be called dramatic interest. In these qualities the letters to Miss Beadnell (and later to Mrs. Winter) probably surpass any series ever written by Dickens, though there are many single examples equally vital and self-revealing. Such, for instance, are the ones which Dickens wrote at the culmination of his domestic infelicities, — those strange letters which tended to destroy "the greatest of Dickens' fictions — himself." Most of these are unpublished, and some are to be found in American collections.

The correspondence with Kolle, it is thought, has a distinct interest of its own and contrib-

utes something to Dickens' biography, although it gives a sketch of a period rather than the complete chapter supplied by the Beadnell group. Some of the present series are the earliest known letters of Dickens; others have a direct connection with the love affair with Maria Beadnell; many of them, in a few sentences, give a more graphic idea of the life of the author as a young man than any correspondence or reminiscences yet published. They are redolent of the joys and dreams of youth and not untinged by its occasional sadness. The first of the letters was written in 1830; the last of the early series in 1835. After the latter date Dickens and Kolle, for twenty-five years, held little if any communication. In 1859, four years after the reappearance of Maria Beadnell, Kolle wrote to his old friend, and again in 1865. The novelist's answers to these two later letters form a part of the present collection.

Of Dickens after the "Pickwick" period the biographical information is as complete as the most exacting specialist could wish. Of the innumerable volumes of mid-Victorian Memoirs and Reminiscences of "people of importance in their day," a large number make

their contribution of side-lights and anecdote. Of Dickens and his family in the period between the blacking warehouse and the *Sketches by Boz*, comparatively little is known. Among the published letters there is but one written during his days of newspaper reporting. It is believed that the correspondence, now for the first time printed, adds to our knowledge of Dickens as a youth in that interesting period when he was emerging from obscurity and coming into his own. An English critic, who is much cleverer than a mere critic has any right to be, has thought it worth his while, at this late day, to devote a book to an appreciation of Dickens. In this work Mr. Chesterton declares that "whatever the word 'great' means, Dickens is that." It might be added that whatever the word "popular" means Dickens is that also. Popular he has been continuously from the publication of the *Sketches by Boz* to the present day. There have been at all times critics hostile to his novels and people who have declared that they could not read Dickens; but their minority report has generally taken the form of a protest against his acknowledged popularity.

During the year 1906, a single London

publishing house sold four hundred and fifty thousand copies of novels by Dickens, and it has been estimated that in that year fifteen hundred thousand copies of his books were sold in England alone. It is probable that as many more were sold in the United States, Canada and Australia, and it is within bounds to say that the annual sales of the Dickens novels amount to three millions of copies. About three hundred and fifty articles dealing with Charles Dickens and his writings are published in magazines and newspapers every year. An incomplete collection of these in the Guildhall Library numbers over ten thousand items. Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, starting to collect all the printed matter relating to "Pickwick" alone, soon found that he had "nearly a roomful." A magazine is devoted to Dickens literature, clubs and fellowships are organized in his honor, and the library of Dickensiana is beginning to rival in extent the literature of Shakespear and Napoleon.[1]

Dickens' principal works have been trans-

[1] In 1838, "Pickwick" was attacked by the *Quarterly Review* which declared that "indications were not wanting that the peculiar vein of humor which has hitherto yielded such attractive metal, is worn out." When this was written by an eminent critical authority, Dickens had published nothing but the *Sketches by Boz*.

lated into every European language. He is read by all sorts and conditions of men, women and children. Lord Jeffreys, Charles Lever, and Walter Savage Landor wept over Little Nell (though Mr. Andrew Lang makes merry over her). Lever declared Dickens to be "the greatest imaginative writer since Shakespear," and Mr. Chesterton, most modern of critics, also corroborates this in a way when he says that claiming to have contributed an idea to Dickens is like saying one has added a glass of water to Niagara. Swinburne, who was nothing if not fastidious, wrote an almost rhapsodical defense of Dickens against his academic detractors. The shop-girl on her way to work is quite as likely to be reading *Copperfield* as *Laura Jean*. The messenger boy taking his time with a "rush" message, if not enthralled by Old Sleuth, is probably delayed by Oliver Twist. At least a dozen times the writer has seen elevator boys reading Dickens. Once — in Boston — one was observed reading Thackeray.

It is a proof of the universal appeal of Dickens that he not only has this vogue with the masses, but is also pre-eminently a collector's author. Judging from observation and from

information supplied by book-sellers, it may be confidently stated that fully nine-tenths of the collectors of modern books collect first editions of Dickens. The name of "Boz" may not lead all the rest, but it is pretty sure to be upon the scroll, whether the collector be a Tennysonian or a Shelleyan, a disciple of St. Charles or a devotee of the Brownings.

The fact is that if one is interested in modern literature at all, and has any of the instincts of a collector, he can hardly escape being a Dickensian. This is particularly true for the reason that book-collectors, in spite of their reputation for solemnity, are a race of humorists. Reference is made to the collectors of modern books, not to those who are on the passenger list of Brandt's *Ship of Fools*, who buy books which they cannot read. Indeed if one must have an answer for the Philistine's question, "*Why first editions?*" one can find it readily in the case of the Dickens books. Apart from the unique form in which they were published, the illustrations as they first appeared make these editions infinitely more desirable than any *de luxe* volumes ever printed for the delusion of the unco rich.

Perhaps next to Lamb, Dickens as a personality is the most lovable of authors. We love Elia in spite of — nay, *because* of — his peculiarities and his little vices; and as we grow to know Dickens through the study of his works, his letters, and the many books about him, we love him in spite of the defects in his character, without which he would be a demigod instead of the hearty, human, friendly creature he is. Loving Dickens as we do, feeling that we know him better than we know many of our friends, any news out of shadow-land is welcome when it can tell us anything of the man that brings him nearer to us. For this reason the printing of the Dickens-Beadnell letters was an event of importance to all admirers of the novelist and all readers of biography, — more vivid and suggestive perhaps than any one chapter in that indispensable biography which has been rudely called *Dickens' Life of Forster.*

The earliest known autograph of Charles Dickens is a note written in his thirteenth year to Owen P. Thomas, his classmate at Wellington House Academy. This note would have been a formidable weapon in the hand of Sergeant Buzfuz, who could have read into

it crime and conspiracy, even as he interpreted the famous "warming-pan" letter as evidence of deliberate and systematic villainy. To the unsuspicious non-legal mind, however, the note indicates nothing worse than juvenile humor and an eye to business. It begins with an apology for neglecting to return Owen Thomas' "Leg," the writer supposing that in the interim Owen has "used a wooden one." Dickens assures his friend that since it has been in his possession "the leg has been weighed every Saturday night;" and the note concludes with an offer to sell a school-book "at a greatly reduced price, much cheaper in comparison than a leg."

What an opportunity for the redoubtable Buzfuz!

"Gentlemen of the jury, I ask you, as husbands and fathers, what is this youthful desperado doing with his comrade's leg? By what dark deed did he possess himself of that graceful member of which each one of us poor mortals claims his allotted share of two? And — mark you — why should this Dickens, with a depravity appalling in one so young, go through the wretched form of weighing his wronged friend's leg every Saturday night?

Gentlemen, the brain reels, the mind is baffled in the presence of such mysteries as these."

Mr. Thomas, writing in 1870, explained that the "Leg" was "a legend of something, a pamphlet romance I had lent him." But the Buzfuzzian mind would have shattered this shallow explanation. Why should a "legend of something" be weighed every Saturday night? As Forster says, "There is some underlying whim or fun in the 'Leg' allusions which Mr. Thomas has overlooked."

The next writing in order of date is found in a "petty cash book" kept by Dickens when, at the age of fifteen, he was employed in the office of Mr. Edward Blackmore, Solicitor, of Lincoln's Inn Fields. This interesting memento was in the collection of Mr. William Wright, dispersed at auction in 1899. Among the entries in Dickens' hand is the charge to himself of a weekly salary of thirteen shillings and sixpence. Many years afterward Mr. Blackmore recorded his memories of young Dickens, who it appears was not too assiduous in his routine of office duties, but inclined to waste time at theatres, where, with a fellow clerk named Potter, he was even suspected of "going on" in minor parts. It is

highly probable that he did so, as the *Sketches by Boz* show a familiarity with life behind the scenes which could have been obtained only by experience. It is curious to note that in this old account book, kept by Dickens in his fifteenth year, are several names which were afterward used by him for characters in his novels.

In editing the Dickens-Beadnell correspondence for The Bibliophile Society, Professor Baker refers to the scarcity of early letters of Dickens. Until the discovery of the letters to Miss Beadnell, only four letters prior to 1836 were published, and these were of no great interest. The Beadnell correspondence belongs to the year 1833, while several of the letters in the present volume were written in 1830 and 1831. These are believed to be the earliest Dickens letters in existence. That still earlier ones may be discovered is possible, but hardly probable. There may lurk in some dusty drawer or closet in an old London house the letters that Dickens wrote to his fellow clerk, the facetious and frolicsome Potter, companion of his secret adventures among the cheap theatres. There may be in existence notes written to his

schoolmates at Wellington House. Possibly some early letters to members of his family may have been preserved. Of autographs of a somewhat later date (1834–1835) there may be future discoveries. In 1834 or 1835 Dickens became acquainted with the Hogarth family, and he undoubtedly wrote letters to Miss Catherine Hogarth, his betrothed, and to her sisters. He must have written occasionally to Thomas Beard, who was best man at his wedding, and who seems to have become his chum after Kolle's marriage.

It is likely, however, that Dickens collectors have come to the end of their treasure trove. In 1870 the editors of the published correspondence were able to obtain no early letters, and of late years the agents of London booksellers and autograph dealers have made diligent search without finding any material of value. After the publication of the *Sketches by Boz*, Dickens became a personage, and his correspondents were more inclined to preserve his letters. Specimens written in 1836 and 1837 are occasionally met with, though they are by no means common.

Shortly before the appearance of The Bibliophile Society's volume, *Charles Dickens and*

Maria Beadnell, the present writer prepared for a magazine an article regarding the Dickens-Kolle correspondence.[1] At that time he was not acquainted with the contents of the Beadnell letters and was compelled to guess and theorize regarding much that is in the Kolle correspondence. A portion of the article thus written is here quoted: —

"The chief interest in the Dickens-Kolle correspondence is the light thrown upon an early love affair. Dickens was under twenty at the time; yet this was no ordinary boyish flirtation, but an enduring love. The writings of later years, the confidences to Mr. Forster, contain so many references to this early romance that it must be considered, like the death of Mary Hogarth, an event that had a life-long influence upon the mind of the author and the heart of the man. The identity of this first love, this real Dora, is now revealed. She was one of the two[2] Misses Beadnell. Kolle was engaged to the elder; Dickens fell desperately in love with the younger. Kolle's suit prospered; but that of

[1] This article was not published, — it having been bought back from the magazine to which it was sold, — and is here printed in part for the first time.

[2] There were three, — Anne, Margaret, and Maria.

Dickens was an example of the proverbial roughness of the course of true love. The father of Miss Beadnell was well-to-do, and it is more than likely that the parents did not view with approval the courtship of a young reporter with a small salary and no prospects worth mentioning. Kolle, however, was the typical young man bound to make his way in the world; he was employed in a bank. It is clear that Dickens was looked upon as a party whom Mrs. Malaprop would have classified as 'illegible.' The letters indicate that at the Beadnell home he was unwelcome, and that when he found his room was preferred to his company, he called upon the favored Kolle to serve as letter-carrier and intercessor. . . . It is quite evident that Dickens sent by Kolle a written proposal of marriage to Miss Beadnell. Delivered on a Saturday, this proposal was not answered till the following Thursday. Doubtless the Dulcinea was deliberating, deciding whether a rebellion against parental authority were worth while. It is likely that she had some fondness for the young man who was in every way attractive; but she was older than Dickens, as he admits in one of his later allusions to her, and she was made prudent

by reflecting upon his financial situation. A second appeal, or events following upon it, resulted in a misunderstanding. Dickens attributes this to envious tongues. Mischief had been made and Lady Sneerwell had been at work. One of Miss Beadnell's friends, a Miss Marianne Leigh, was a cause of jealousy and disputes. . . ."

It will be seen that the letters to Kolle supplied a fairly accurate key to the then unpublished Beadnell correspondence.

The collector's history of these autographs is as follows: It will be remembered that William Henry Kolle married Anne Beadnell, sister of Dickens' inamorata. Mrs. Kolle died, and the widower married again. Kolle died in 1881. In February, 1890, his widow offered for sale to a London dealer the letters written by Dickens to her husband. They were promptly purchased, and in response to the dealer's request for information concerning them, Mrs. Kolle wrote: —

WEST BRIGHTON,
February 12, 1890.

Dear Sir, — I beg to acknowledge, with thanks, receipt of postal orders, and I am most willing to answer your inquiries. My husband prized the letters highly in remembrance of his youthful friendship with Charles

Dickens. He always kept them locked up in a drawer to which *even I* had not access till after his death nine years ago. They remained in the same drawer untouched until about three weeks ago, when I perused them for the first time, and it occurred to me that as autographs they might be worth money — as you phrased it — and so I got the idea of sending them to an autograph sale, but your offer altered this project. My husband and C. Dickens first met at the house of a mutual friend, became attached to two sisters of the name of Beadnell, and so the intimacy commenced. My husband was at that time engaged in a banking house in the city, but soon after his first marriage entered into commercial pursuits. C. Dickens, as everyone knows, was struggling for fame as an author, and so the friends diverged into different lines of life, but the old kind feelings still existed, as you will see by two letters which I enclose for your perusal, and which my step-daughter, whom you saw the other evening, prizes "above rubies," although they dashed her hopes of becoming a poetess. Please take great care of the two letters which I have borrowed, as my daughter does not wish them creased unnecessarily. . . . My husband assisted on one or two occasions at some private amateur theatricals in the house of the elder Mr. Dickens.

Yours truly,

S. J. KOLLE

There was some further correspondence between the London dealer and Mrs. Kolle, and eventually Miss Anne Kolle (named after her

mother, Anne Beadnell) sold the two later letters addressed by Dickens to her father. Immediately after concluding the purchase of the collection, the book-seller sent a description of the contents to the late Augustin Daly and offered them to him. Mr. Daly purchased them and had them bound in a folio volume together with a miscellaneous collection of autograph letters of literary celebrities. There was no attempt at classifying the contents and the volume bore no descriptive title.

It may be doubted whether Mr. Daly himself knew or appreciated the prize he had acquired; for, although he took a lively interest in his collection, he had such quantities of letters, books, and prints, that to have known and loved them all would have left him no time for the exacting and multifarious duties of a theatrical manager. In fact, Mr. Daly once laughingly admitted to the writer that he did not know what he had. He was, perhaps, more interested in collecting than in his collection, in the chase than in the quarry. Mr. Daly acquired the Dickens-Kolle letters in 1890. In March, 1900, the Daly collection was sold at auction in New York. The description in the catalogue of the volume con-

taining the Kolle letters gave no indication of the unique interest of the correspondence and the book sold for a moderate price.

The letter of the London dealer offering the autographs to Mr. Daly was a part of the "lot" and in it the number of the letters to Kolle is distinctly stated to be *twenty-five*. Of these, twenty-three were described as early letters and the other two as dated 1859 and 1865. When the volume appeared in the auction room it contained but *twenty-one* of the early letters. Two of them had mysteriously disappeared, nor was there any evidence of their having been in the book at any time. What has become of them? Mr. Daly had several extra-illustrated volumes of Dickensiana. Some of these contained a considerable number of Dickens' autograph letters. He employed a specialist to do his extra-illustrating, the selecting and preparing of material. The Kolle letters were delivered to Mr. Daly in their original condition, not bound in book form. It is quite likely that in choosing the material for some extra-illustrated work, like the Daly copy of Forster's *Life*, the two letters now missing were included as specimens of an early period. It might be worth

while for the possessors of some of the extra-illustrated books from the Daly collection to examine their contents carefully with a view to detecting these missing autographic links. The hope expressed by Professor Baker that the publication of the Beadnell correspondence might reveal the letters to Kolle is echoed here with regard to these two wandering missives.

Like the early Beadnell letters, those of Dickens to Kolle, with one exception, bear no date, only the day of the week. The one exception is dated January 5, 1833. Two of the letters are postmarked 1833. The watermarks on several are 1830 and 1831. The date of the one letter and the postmarks on the two are important, as they prove that most of the other letters were written before January 5, 1833.

The verses, *The Bill of Fare,* printed in the Beadnell correspondence, fix exactly the month and the year in which Dickens fell in love with Maria Beadnell. That the verses were written in 1831 is shown by the reference to the marriage of David Lloyd and Margaret Beadnell, which occurred in April, 1831. That it was in the autumn or winter of 1831 is shown by the lines speaking of Lloyd:—

That when he *last summer* from Paris came home
(I think 't was his marriage induced him to roam).

In the poem Dickens says of himself, —

Charles Dickens, who in our feast plays a part,
Is a young summer cabbage without any heart; —
Not that he 's heartless, but because, as folks say,
He lost his *twelve months ago from last May*.

"Twelve months ago from last May" would mean May, 1830. In this manner Dickens himself fixes, beyond reasonable doubt, the date of his conquest by Dora.[1]

In his letter to John Forster in 1855, in answer to the latter's questioning the existence of a Dora in real life, the novelist states that his love for the original Dora began "when I was Charley's age" and "excluded every other idea from my mind for four years." As Miss Beadnell finally rejected Dickens in May, 1833, and as he admits that he lost his heart to her in May 1830, this allows a twelvemonth for recovery from the blow that was so decidedly a blessing in disguise. It is unlikely that Dickens' own evidence in the poem and in his letter to Forster is inexact. The love af-

[1] Forster gives 1829 as the date of the first appearance of the "real Dora." Vol. I, 71.

fair was too important an event in his life for him to be in doubt — even twenty years later — whether it lasted four years or three. The poem, *The Bill of Fare,* obviously was written to impress Maria Beadnell, to express his devotion in a manner which, if regarded as too bold, could be passed off as a jest, and incidentally to show her and her friends that he was a clever fellow. By mentioning the time, "twelve months ago from last May," Dickens may have intended to tell Maria that he had fallen in love with her at first sight, as they may have met for the first time during that month. At all events, it is not likely that he had known her more than a month or two before losing his heart. He was eighteen years old and even more impulsive and impressionable than most youths of that age. It is practically certain that Dickens was introduced to the Beadnell family at some time between January and May, 1830. In all probability, he met the Beadnells through Kolle. The letter of Mrs. S. J. Kolle indicates that her husband and Dickens met at the house of a common friend and afterward became acquainted with the Beadnell family. Mrs. Kolle states that her husband was at that time

"engaged in a banking house in the city, but soon after his first marriage entered into commercial pursuits;" that is to say, he became a quill-printer. With what bank young Kolle was connected is not ascertainable, but it is quite likely that he was a clerk in the establishment of Smith, Payne and Smith, in which George Beadnell held a responsible position.

The letters to Kolle furnish evidence that the two young men first met in the spring of 1830, and the two letters following may be ascribed to that date. Dickens could not have known Kolle for any length of time, for in both letters he misspells the name of his new friend, writing it with a terminal "ie." This might be regarded as a nickname or a playful version of the name, were it not for the fact that both these letters are written in a comparatively formal style, while, as the others of the series become more familiar and indicate intimate friendship, Kolle's name is correctly written. In these two letters the handwriting is considerably more unformed and juvenile than in those known to have been written in 1832 and 1833. It is, in fact, quite a boyish hand. That these were not written earlier than the spring of 1830 is shown by Dickens'

My dear Nellie:

Some you ten thousand apologies for not having seen you last night but the fact is that I found out [illegible] in the evening that I could not leave the house until a quarter past ten and thought it would be useless to endeavour to make my way

of another day to your
taste always promising
that if I accept your next
Invitation no consideration
shall induce me to depart
from it

With my best remem-
brances to

Believe me
My dear Hollis
Very truly Yours
Charles Dickens

I see there are two superfluous
[illegible]

statement that he can name no night to go out to play "until the House is up." The novelist himself is the authority for the statement that he entered the reporters' gallery "when not yet 18." There are two veiled allusions to the Beadnell family. In one letter Dickens expresses his envy of Kolle's devotions [to Anne Beadnell] and in the other he sends his "best remembrances to (?);" the interrogation point being a cryptic reference to Maria Beadnell. The allusion to the poor accommodations at Cecil street also points to the date 1830. The following letter, being the more formal in expression, is probably the earlier of the two. It is the earliest Dickens letter known, with the single exception of the schoolboy note written at Wellington House Academy. —

My dear Kollie, — I owe you ten thousand apologies for not having seen you last night, but the fact is that I found out late in the evening that I could not leave the House until a quarter past ten, and I thought it would be useless to endeavor to make my way into the city at that hour. As I was not aware of the melancholy fact in sufficient time to send for you (I mean *to* you, but I do not like scratching out) I hope I need not ask you to excuse the apparent inattention on my part. It is equally unnecessary to add that I was very much disappointed, as I looked forward to having a very comfortable couple of hours.

I fear, until the House is up, I can name no certain night on which I can go to play, except Saturday. However, I leave the selection of another day to your taste, always promising that if I accept your next invitation, no consideration shall induce me to depart from it.

With my best remembrances to (?), believe me, my dear Kollie,

Very truly yours,

CHARLES DICKENS

I see there are two superfluous I's in this note, but I suppose you are not particular to a shade. The sun is so obscured that I intend living under the planet no longer than Saturday week next.

It will be observed that the tone of the note is rather formal and apologetic. The writer regrets his failure to keep an appointment; explains a slip in expression and a superabundance of capital I's. It is possible, of course, that the "best remembrances to (?)" may not refer to Maria Beadnell; but if, as seems certain, the letter was written in the spring of 1830, it is more than likely that the allusion is to the young woman to whom Dickens, by his own confession, lost his heart in the May of that year. The next letter was written a few days later. In this also Kolle's name is incorrectly spelled. Of the place from which this was written, North End, Mr. F. G. Kitton

says: "Certain letters written to an intimate friend indicate such addresses as North End (? Fulham) and Fitzroy street." The letter following — which is the one to which Mr. Kitton refers — was apparently written while Dickens was enjoying a holiday. The whole tone of it indicates that he has no business cares to prevent his enjoying himself in his own way. That it was written while on a vacation is shown, too, by the fact that the writer speaks of having left one place of residence and not yet having "fixed upon 'a local habitation and a name!'"

NORTH END,
Friday evening.

My dear Kollie, — I have great pleasure in being able to assure you that I shall be perfectly disengaged on Sunday next, and shall expect you. I always rise out here by seven, and therefore you may safely wend your way here before one, if you can.

In reply to your inquiry respecting a sizable pony, I have great satisfaction in being able to say that I can procure you an "'oss" which I have had once or twice since I have been here. I am a poor judge of distance, but I should certainly say that your legs would be off the ground when you are on his back. To look at the animal in question you would think (with the exception of dog's meat) there was no earthly purpose to which he could be applied. But when you try him, joking apart,

I will pledge you my veracity, he will beat any horse, hired or private, that you would see in a morning's ride. I am his especial patron, but on this occasion I will procure something smaller for myself.

Pray come before one, as I shall order them to be at the door punctually at that hour, and we can mount, dismount, and ride eight or ten miles without seeing a soul, the peasantry excepted.

The people at Cecil street put too much water in their hashes, lost a nutmeg grater, attended on me most miserably, dirted the table cloth, &c., &c.; and so (detesting petty miseries) I gave them warning and have not yet fixed upon a "local habitation and a name."

Envying you your devotions, notwithstanding the pilgrimage attendant thereon, and wishing you every success and happiness, I remain, my dear Kollie,

Yours most truly,

Come early. CHARLES DICKENS

[P. S.] I shall depend on your staying all night. You shall have breakfast by half past seven next morning, as I must walk to town the very first thing.

C. D.

The paragraph preceding the signature alludes to Kolle's courtship of Anne Beadnell, and Dickens' envy was due to his growing admiration for her sister, which was already an object of parental disapproval. In the pen portrait of the "sizable pony" there is a suggestion of the gift for humorous description

which was soon to find expression in the *Sketches by Boz*. Indeed, it may be surmised that the animal was the model for the "immense brown horse displaying great symmetry of bone" which caused such annoyance to Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Winkle during their memorable journey to Dingley Dell.

Next in the series, in order of date, are six letters written from Fitzroy street. These are without date by the writer, but the year in which they were written can be fixed with tolerable accuracy. In the case of three of the letters the paper bears the water-mark of 1830. The address Fitzroy street helps to establish the date. Thanks to the researches of enthusiastic Dickensians, and particularly to the zeal of the late F. G. Kitton, the various places of residence of Dickens and his family may be accurately traced by anyone curious in such matters. For the sake of assigning these letters to their correct year, and for the better realization of the circumstances under which they were written, one may briefly recapitulate the principal events in this period of the life of Dickens.

On removing to London with his family in 1823, John Dickens lived first at No. 16 Bay-

ham street (now No. 141). He removed from there probably about Christmas, 1823; certainly not later than January 21, 1824. Up to Lady Day, 1824, Mrs. Dickens was proving that she would "never desert Mr. Micawber" by endeavoring to establish a school for girls at No. 4 Gower street. It was from this house that Dickens, a boy of eleven, sallied forth to distribute circulars calling attention to the merits of the establishment. "Yet nobody ever came to school," he wrote to Forster, "nor do I recollect that anybody ever proposed to come."

From the Gower street house John Dickens was taken to the Marshalsea, and Charles, then twelve years old, went to live as a lodger with Mrs. Roylance, incidentally to make mental notes for the study of Mrs. Pipchin. These were the dark days of the blacking warehouse. Mrs. Roylance lived at No. 37 Little College street, Camden Town, till the end of 1825. During a part of this year the boy lived in a back attic in Lant street, where he met Bob Sawyer and the Garland family. While he was lodging here "something turned up," the timely legacy came to his father, who was released from bondage. According to Forster, a brief so-

journ at Hampstead for the entire family followed the improvement in John Dickens' circumstances. The wanderers then established themselves — July, 1825 — in a small tenement, No. 13 Johnson street, Somerstown. Mr. Kitton states that, according to the rate book, Caroline Dickens was the tenant of these premises till January, 1829.

On the family's removal to Johnson street, after John Dickens' release in 1825, Charles, then thirteen years old, was sent to Wellington House Academy. According to Dr. Henry Danson, who was a fellow pupil at Wellington House, Dickens, while attending the school, lived in "a very small house in a street leading out of Seymour street." Forster and other biographers state that Dickens remained at Wellington House Academy for about two years; but it appears that they have rather overestimated the duration of his school days. It was March 25, 1824, that the Gower street house was given up. Then followed the period of the Marshalsea for the father and Hungerford Stairs for the boy. This purgatory seems to have continued until the summer of 1825, though Dickens, in his confidences to Forster, says: "I have no idea how long it

lasted, — whether for a year, or much more, or less." One can best determine the duration of this time of misery and humiliation by the rate books and other records showing the tenancy of the Dickens family of various houses and lodgings. There is no record for the period between March 25, 1824, and July, 1825. In all probability, this was the length of time that John Dickens was a prisoner for debt, and the blacking warehouse sentence must have been for one year and three months.

Dickens certainly did not enter Wellington House Academy until after his father had been given freedom. He could not have begun his attendance much before September, 1825. Two years at the school would terminate in the autumn of 1827. Yet it is certain that he entered the offices of Ellis and Blackmore in *May*, 1827, and previous to that he had been employed in the office of Mr. Molloy. It appears probable that Dickens did not have much more than one year's schooling — possibly eighteen months' — apart from the lessons he received as a small child from the Reverend William Giles, the Baptist clergyman at Chatham. What wonder that John Dickens, when asked about his son's

education, replied: "Why, sir, he may be said to have educated himself!"

When Charles Dickens left the Ellis and Blackmore office (November, 1828) he was within three months of his seventeenth birthday. At this time he began his work as a court reporter. Three months later the Dickens family moved to the Polygon, Somerstown. From the time he left school to the date of the family's removal to the Polygon, the boy lived with his father and mother and contributed a share of his earnings to the general exchequer. It is likely that the lodging in Cecil street, unfavorably mentioned in the second letter in the present series, was Dickens' first separate residence after his start in life as a reporter. In 1830 the Dickens family took up their residence in Fitzroy street, Fitzroy Square, and Charles returned to live at home, he and his father earning at this time about ten pounds a week. This was comparative affluence. Dickens began to make congenial acquaintances; was taken up by respectable middle-class Londoners, and Mrs. Beadnell was sponsor for him in a coterie which to his unsophisticated eyes appeared to be Society. It may be imagined

with what care he concealed the episodes of the Marshalsea and the blacking warehouse, and in what terror he lived, dreading a chance revelation to his eminently respectable friends.

Although the house in Fitzroy street was occupied by the Dickens family for nearly three years, it is not mentioned in any of the biographies. Mr. Kitton makes an allusion to it, but knew this early home of Dickens only through having seen the Kolle letters. These show that after living nearly three years in Fitzroy street, the family moved to Bentinck street early in January, 1833.

With the residence in Fitzroy street there began a new life for Charles Dickens and for all the members of his family. The flamboyant geniality of the father expanded in the sunlight of moderate prosperity. He doubtless still indulged in the Micawber-like predilection for spending a little more than he earned. He was perhaps a little too fond of the flowing bowl, and certain letters recently brought to light show that he could seek small loans in large language; but he was a companionable man in his home; he even took part in the private theatricals given by Charles and his friends. There was a piano in the parlor and

there were occasional trips to the country. Dickens, as a young reporter in the police courts, in Doctor's Commons and in Parliament, saw much of varied phases of London life, and we may take it for granted that he found his work congenial and got a good deal of fun out of it. "The key of the street" — as Mr. Chesterton says — was handed to him in the old days at Hungerford Stairs; but at this time he began to use it to unlock new meanings and mysteries. For recreations there were the playhouses, private theatricals, occasional visits in society, incipient heart interests, and the usual pranks of precocious young men of eighteen with the freedom of the city of London.

One obtains an idea of the gaieties in which young Dickens indulged from the sketch entitled *Making a Night of It.* In this the city clerk, Thomas Potter, was no doubt the identical Potter who was his fellow clerk at Ellis and Blackmore's and who shared his fondness for the theatre. The following letter appears to have been written after the two young men had been "Making a Night of It," though it is not possible to say whether Dickens himself played the rôle of Mr. Robert Smithers in the sketch of that title: —

FITZROY STREET,
Thursday morning.

My dear Kolle, —I recollect this morning to my great horror that I owe you eighteen pence which I borrowed and forgot to return last night. I therefore hasten to repair the omission with all possible despatch. A cab driver whom I was obliged to ask for change last night, gave me a bad five-shilling piece, so that I was in luck altogether.

My cold is about as bad as a cold can be, and on the whole I feel tolerably happy and comfortable today, the state of the weather being so admirably adapted to dispel any gloomy ideas, of which I always have a very plentiful stock.

Believe me,
Yours most truly,
CHARLES DICKENS

"Thank Heaven, *Pickwick* will soon be out," exclaimed the invalid after his prosy pastor's visit. Yet here we find the future creator of *Pickwick* confessing to being in the "low state" of Mrs. Gummidge. This letter must have been written early in 1830, for the reason that Dickens evidently did not know Kolle as an intimate friend at the time. Otherwise he would not have written in great haste to return a loan of eighteen pence. The next letter belongs to a somewhat later time in the same year, and the outing in prospect doubtless refers to a bank holiday excursion.

My dear Kolle, — Are you going out of town next Saturday, because if you are not, we propose to get one or two young men together for the purpose of knocking up a song or two, and I am specially directed to beg your attendance on the occasion. I give you this early notice, not because there is anything formal or party-like in the arrangements for that day, but in order that I may have a better chance of securing you. You will perhaps oblige me with a line at your earliest convenience, giving me your arrangements for Saturday, and the probability of your local destination on that day.

Trusting that everything goes on as well as ever (which I have been more than once inclined to doubt, in consequence of not hearing from or seeing you), I remain, my dear Kolle,

Yours sincerely,

FITZROY STREET, CHARLES DICKENS
Monday morning [1830].

The date of the next letter can be fixed exactly. It will be observed that it contains an invitation to dine on Christmas Day, which in the last paragraph is mentioned as Tuesday. The letter was written on the Thursday preceding, which would be December 20th. The Dickens family are prospering. "Our man" shall return the borrowed books to Kolle. The reference to the mendacious Miss Evans shows that Marianne Leigh was not the only one in the Beadnell social circle inclined to make

mischief. Possibly Miss Evans had given currency to rumors about Charley Dickens' family history which inclined to lower him in the opinion of his Lombard street friends.

FITZROY STREET,
Thursday morning.

My dear Kolle, I am exceedingly sorry that I was so unfortunate as to select last night for my annual visit to Drury Lane, as I should have very much preferred having a chat and cigar with you. I hope, however, you will give me an early opportunity of doing so. How are you engaged on Christmas Day? If you do not join any family party of your own, will you dine with us? It will, I need hardly say, give us all the greatest pleasure to see you. Perhaps you will let me know by a line per post. I have two books of yours which I am quite ashamed of having kept so long. Our man shall bring them this week without fail.

I long to give you my opinion of that Miss Evans, and to communicate some monstrously strong circumstantial evidence to prove that she must tell the most confounded ——— As yours are "ears polite" I shall leave your imagination and observation to supply the blank.

Trusting that you have (as you easily may have) no better engagement for *Tuesday* than I can offer you, believe me,

Yours sincerely,

CHARLES DICKENS

Of course I came home last night exactly four minutes after you left.

One wonders if the Christmas party at John Dickens' house in Fitzroy street had anything of the gaiety and spirit of Bob Cratchit's feast. Surely it had, with two hosts like young Dickens and his jovial father. No doubt it was a real old English middle-class Christmas, with a punch-bowl many times replenished, a goose — "there never was such a goose!" — songs, and round games, and dancing and the drinking of healths, with the original Micawber as toastmaster.

There is nothing in the contents of the next letter which aids in fixing its date, excepting that it belongs to the Fitzroy street group. It was surely written in the spring or summer, and either in 1830 or 1831.

FITZROY STREET,
Wednesday.

My dear Kolle, — As we have had a little sickness among our family, we intend going to Highgate for a fortnight. The spot we have chosen is in a very pleasant neighborhood, and I have discovered a green lane which looks as if nature had intended it for a smoking place. If you can make it convenient to come down, write to me and fix your own day. I am sorry I cannot offer you a bed, because we are so pressed for room that I myself hang out at "the Red Lion;" but should you be disposed to stay all night, I have no doubt you can be provided with a bed at the same establishment. The address

is "Mrs. Goodman's, next door to the old Red Lion, Highgate." The place has no other name; but a two-penny directed as above will no doubt find us. Remember me to all friends, and believe me, in haste,

Most truly yours,

CHARLES DICKENS

Twenty years after this letter was written, Dickens' father and mother were buried at Highgate Cemetery, and there too his infant daughter, Dora, was laid to rest. He wrote to Forster, in 1852, "My Highgate journey yesterday was a sad one. Sad to think how all journeys tend that way. Wild ideas are upon me of going to Paris — Rouen — Switzerland — and writing the remaining two-thirds of the next number, aloft in some queer inn room." The terrible restlessness that turned so much of his work into self-torment was upon him then, for he had become a famous man; youth and carelessness and peace of mind had gone from him forever, and instead of looking for a green lane wherein to idle for a summer's day, he sought feverishly for some new environment which might stimulate his imagination.

The next two letters refer to a proposal of marriage written by Dickens and sent by Kolle

to be delivered to Maria Beadnell. It is impossible to draw any other inference from the contents. Unfortunately, there is no internal evidence to fix the date of these letters. We know that they were written before January 5, 1833, as on that date the Dickens family removed from Fitzroy street to the Bentinck street house. It was from the latter that Dickens addressed the letters to Maria Beadnell which are contained in The Bibliophile Society's recent volume. Reverting to the poem, *The Bill of Fare*, we recall Dickens' confession that he had lost his heart to Maria "one year from last May," or May, 1830. It is more likely, however, that *The Bill of Fare* was Dickens' first declaration of his affections for Miss Beadnell, as its daring, if disapproved, could have been accounted for by calling the verses mere fun. The poem was written to be seen by all the persons mentioned in it, and it is not probable that Dickens would have written as he did in these verses of a young girl whom he had already asked to be his wife, whether his proposal had met with favor or not. One is inclined to think that the next two letters were written in 1831.

FITZROY STREET,
Thursday morning.

My dear Kolle, — I would really feel some delicacy in asking you again to deliver the enclosed as addressed, were it not for two reasons. In the first place, you know so well my existing situation that you must be almost perfectly aware of the general nature of the note, and in the second, I should not have written it, for I should have communicated its contents verbally, were it not that I lost the opportunity of keeping the old gentleman out of the way as long as possible last night. To these reasons you may add that I have not the slightest objection to your knowing its contents from the first syllable to the last.

I trust under these circumstances that you will not object to doing me the very essential service of delivering the enclosed as soon this afternoon as you can, and perhaps you will accompany the delivery by asking Miss Beadnell only to read it when she is quite alone. Of course in this sense I consider you as nobody.

By complying with this request you will confer a very great favor on, dear Kolle,

Yours most truly,

CHARLES DICKENS

Excuse haste.

From this letter there may be obtained a fair idea of the position of young Dickens in the Beadnell family. He was liked for his engaging social qualities and his agreeable personality. Mrs. Beadnell, who, judging from

the pen portrait in *The Bill of Fare*, was a good-hearted matron, was partial to the youth; but certainly he was not to be taken seriously as an admirer of one of her daughters. By wise fathers and mothers his profession is regarded as precarious; he was something of a Bohemian, — perhaps a trifle fast. Some of these letters indicate much cigar smoking, and a little too much drinking for a youth of eighteen. He was always fond of fine raiment, — no doubt as much so at eighteen as he was in his days of velvet coats and gaudy waistcoats. He was excellent company, the life of a party, but not to be considered as a suitor. No doubt Maria Beadnell, somewhat older than Dickens, regarded him much in the manner of her mother.

There is something delightfully boyish in the reference in this letter to the difficulty of "keeping the old gentleman out of the way," — Rosina and Almaviva in an English setting. What manner of man was the old gentleman who would not be kept out of the way? The portrait of Mr. Beadnell in *The Bill of Fare* verses is negative, but contrasts so vividly with the complimentary description of Mrs. Beadnell that one infers Dickens' dis-

like of him. No doubt we have a sketch of him in Mr. Casby; and one suspects that he, as well as Mr. S. C. Hall, contributed some of the qualities of Mr. Pecksniff, — perhaps the manner of that great and good man toward his fair daughters. Mr. Pecksniff, too, was a sort of architect, — the profession of which Mr. Beadnell had been an ornament. The little that we know of him indicates that he was a pompous and ponderous person, — one of those middle-class Englishmen on whom the affairs of the British Empire weigh heavily. "His opinions," wrote Dickens, "were always *sound* and sincere," with the "sound" in italics. The joke reminds one of Jerrold's answer to the bore's question: "Are not my opinions sound?" "They are, and nothing else."

In the Dickens-Beadnell volume is printed a letter from the novelist to George Beadnell, written in 1852. The original of this letter, by the way, is in the possession of the present writer. Unfortunately George Beadnell's invitation, to which this is a reply, was burnt in the holocaust of autographs at Gad's Hill in 1860. Very likely it would tell us something of Mr. Beadnell's characteristics.

The foregoing letter seems to prove that

while Kolle was the accepted suitor of Anne Beadnell, the engagement being sanctioned by her parents, Dickens' courtship of Maria was surreptitious. It also shows that Kolle was Dickens' confidant in his love affair. Sent on Thursday, the love-letter or offer of marriage was promptly answered, as Dickens received Miss Beadnell's reply the next morning. In it he was asked to send another letter by Kolle.

FITZROY STREET,
Friday morning.

My dear Kolle, — As I was requested in a note I received this morning to forward my answer by the same means as my first note, I am emboldened to ask you if you will be so kind as to deliver the enclosed for me when you practise your customary duet this afternoon. I hope you will not make it long before in mere charity you look in upon me.

Believe me, my dear Kolle,
Yours sincerely,
CHARLES DICKENS

If, as it is surmised, the earlier letter transmitted by Kolle was an offer of marriage, it is evident that Maria gave Dickens no definite reply. She could not have said "yes," or "no." She kept her swain in suspense. Being a coquettish young person, she enjoyed

the homage of love-letters, particularly as they were cleverly written by an ardent and attractive youth. She temporized, and doubtless relished the cat-and-mouse game. Dickens was serious enough for two. "I hope," he writes to Kolle, "you will not make it long before in mere charity you look in upon me."

From any evidence known to be in existence, it is impossible to determine the relations of Charles Dickens and Maria Beadnell from the time of this correspondence until the misunderstanding and final separation in the spring of 1833. It is most likely that there was a clandestine engagement which Dickens regarded as a very serious matter, but which Miss Beadnell considered a source of amusement. It is safe to assume that there was no engagement with parental consent. Neither George Beadnell nor his wife would be likely to approve of the betrothal of their daughter to a youth under twenty, somewhat volatile and unstable, and with no substantial worldly prospects. Maria possessed beauty and charm, and, however bright and clever Dickens might be considered, the Beadnells had higher expectations for her. Forster intimates that there was a

secret engagement when he quotes the following as an allusion to the "Dora of 1829."

"The lovers sit looking at one another so superlatively happy, that I mind me when I, turned of eighteen, went with my Angelica to a city church on account of a shower (by this special coincidence that it was in Huggin-lane), and when I said to my Angelica, 'Let the blessed event, Angelica, occur at no altar but this!' and when my Angelica consented that it should occur at no other, — which it certainly never did, for it never occurred anywhere. And O, Angelica, what has become of you, the present Sunday morning when I can't attend to the sermon, and, more difficult question than that, what has become of *me* as I was when I sat by your side?"

That there was an engagement of some kind seems certain. Dickens refers to the affair as having "excluded every other idea from my mind for four years at a time of life when four years are equal to four times four." It is not to be supposed that a love affair would "pervade every chink and crevice of his mind for three or four years," unless there were an engagement at some time during that period. That the relations were equivalent to those

of affianced lovers is shown by the Dickens-Beadnell correspondence. If there were no definite relations to break off, why did it require the exchange of so many letters? That Maria Beadnell ever had any serious idea of marrying Dickens is not probable; but it is fairly certain that he considered her his betrothed, that he expected to marry her, and that she deluded him into that hope. Probably he was the most attractive young man in a coterie which is not likely to have been notably brilliant.

The preceding letters are the only ones known positively to have been written before January, 1833. In that month the Dickens family removed from the house in Fitzroy street to one in Bentinck street, Manchester Square. Forster names 1831 as the date of residence in the latter, but he seems to have had no knowledge of the Fitzroy street home, where the family lived for at least two years. The next letter following is the only one bearing a date in the writer's hand. It was written January 5, 1833, and proves exactly the time of the removal to Bentinck street. This is of some interest, as it was while living in the Bentinck street house that Dickens made his

beginning in literature. It was in a room in this house that he wrote his first sketch, the manuscript of which he mailed with an agitation which he has vividly described. The house was No. 18. About fifteen years ago it was torn down to make room for a row of modern mansions; and Mr. Kitton at the time of his investigations found that the tenant of No. 19 "oddly enough bore the novelist's patronymic."

Dear Kolle, — Will you excuse my postponing the pleasure of seeing yourself and brother until Sunday week? my reason is this:

As we are having coals in at the new place, cleaning, &c., we cannot very well remove until Tuesday or Wednesday next. The piano will most likely go to Bentinck Street today, and as I have already said, we cannot accompany it, so that the piano will be in one place and we in another.

In addition to this we shall be all in bustle and I fear should impress your brother with a very uncomfortable idea of our domestic arrangements. Will you therefore let me hope to see you on Sunday week, when perhaps we shall be enabled to get a friend of yours to meet you.

I was not certain last night that we should postpone our removal; had I been so I would have spared you the infliction of deciphering this elegant epistle.

Believe me, my dear Kolle,

Yours most truly,

CHARLES DICKENS

Saturday, Jan. 5, 1833.

It will be seen that the Marshalsea was now so far in the background that a piano was a household necessity with the Dickens family, and that, too, when pianos were less common than at present. Music probably played an important part in the social life of Dickens and his young friends. His sister Fanny was a prize pupil at the Royal Academy, and, as one of the preceding letters shows, he was fond of getting together a party of young men for the purpose of "knocking up a song or two." The next letter makes good the postponed invitation, and the house-warming party in the new house in Bentinck street was given January 11. —

Dear Kolle, — I enclose an invitation to yourself and both your brothers for the 11th. I do not like after partaking so liberally of your hospitality to leave anyone out.

I was sorry to hear you were "diskivered" the other night, though I do not know that the thing is a bit the worse for it in the end.

Let me see you one evening this week because next the House begins. I shall be at home.

Believe me, my dear Kolle,

Most sincerely,

CHARLES DICKENS

BENTINCK STREET.

Dickens' regret at Kolle's being "diskivered" may refer to the latter's having been caught in the act of carrying a note to Maria. Kolle's courtship of Anne Beadnell continued to prosper, but Dickens seems to have made no definite progress. Dora was either worn out by the opposition of her parents, or she found that playing the coquette with one faithful and enamoured young man became monotonous. In February or March, 1833, her coldness to Dickens — "heartless indifference," he calls it — became more than he could endure, and he wrote the first of the printed letters to Miss Beadnell. Shortly afterward, Kolle's engagement to Anne was formally announced. The despondency of Dickens at this time and his wretchedness because of the ill-treatment he received are shown by his letters to Miss Beadnell and his confidences to Forster years afterward. But he made a good fight and ambition began to stir within him. If he could not win Dora, he would prove to her that she had lost a lover of whom she might have been proud. It is likely that at this time he thought seriously of becoming an actor. Dickens told Forster that when he was "about twenty," he

applied to Bartley, stage manager at Covent Garden, for an engagement.

The next letter was written in April, 1833. It contrasts Kolle's good fortune with his own unhappy situation, and one may feel the self-pity of youth suffering the pangs of despised love. At the same time there is an intimated determination to throw off depression by taking up with other interests. Dora may frown, but David will try to forget her unkindness by throwing himself heart and soul into a congenial task. —

BENTINCK STREET,
Monday morning [April, 1833].

My dear Kolle, — I received your note the other day and of course much regretted the absence of any member of my company on the occasion of a grand rehearsal. You ask me whether I do not congratulate you. I do most sincerely. If anyone can be supposed to take a lively and real interest in such a case it is an old and mutual friend of both parties. Though perhaps I cannot lay claim to an *old* friend I hope I may be that of a real one, and although unfortunately and unhappily for myself, I have no fellow-feeling with you, no cause to sympathize with your past causes of annoyance, or your present prospects of happiness, I am not the less disposed to offer my heartfelt congratulations to you because you are, or at all events will be, what I never can, happy and contented, taking present grievances as happiness, com-

pared with former difficulties and looking cheerfully and steadily forward to a bright prospective of many happy years.

Now turning from feeling and making oneself miserable, and so on, may I ask you to spare one evening this week for the purpose of doing your two pair of side scenes. I would not ask you, but I really have no other resource. The time is fast approaching and I am rather nervous. Will you write and tell me when you will come and when I may send for your scene. Thursday is a rehearsal of *Clari* with the band, and Friday week a dress rehearsal.

You shall have your bills when I see you. An immense audience are invited, including many judges. Write me an answer to these queries as soon as possible, pray.

The family are busy. The corps dramatic are all anxiety. The scenery is all completing rapidly, the machinery is finished, the curtain hemmed, the orchestra complete and the manager grimy.

Believe me, my dear Kolle,

Truly yours,

CHARLES DICKENS

It is rather startling to read the confession of Charles Dickens at the age of twenty-one that he is not and never can be happy and contented; but a vein of melancholy appears in several of these letters to Kolle as well as in those to Maria Beadnell. His despondent introspection at the time was due partly to the

unhappy outcome of his love affair; but it was also an essential quality in Dickens' temperament. The greatest humorist of his time was also the most sentimental of men, and most intensely so about himself. Humor and a tendency to be "sad as night only for wantoness" arise from the same causes, sensibility and imagination. Molière was a melancholy man. Liston, the drollest of comedians, in a fit of melancholia, visited a doctor who, not recognizing him, advised him to "go to see Liston act." Dickens, with all his joviality and the genuine gaiety of most of his writings, was a man of many heart-aches. It is part of the law of compensation that one who most intensely enjoys the good in life must suffer most keenly from its ills.

This and the next two letters refer to the performance of *Clari*, or the *Maid of Milan*, by an amateur company organized and directed by Dickens. This representation took place on Saturday evening, April 27, 1833, and these letters were written during the progress of the rehearsals. Kolle appears to have been an important factor in the amateur theatricals, as he was cast for a prominent part in *Clari* and was also called upon to paint the

scenery. But Kolle had not Dickens' incentive to work; he had no sorrows to disperse and no broken heart to forget. As a newly engaged young man, he had no evenings to devote to the painting of side scenes. "To sport with Amaryllis in the shade" was his specialty for the moment, and he much preferred rehearsing his love scenes with the gentle Anne to practising the mouthings of "the Nobleman" in John Howard Payne's opera. Who can blame him for absenting himself from rehearsals to an extent that brought upon him the rebuke of the young director and stage manager?

BENTINCK STREET,
Tuesday morning [April, 1833].

My dear Kolle, — I will not say that I have been surprised at our not hearing from or seeing you, either on the day you mentioned in your note or any other time since its receipt, because of course we know from practical experience in other cases that a little flow of prosperity is an excellent cooler of former friendships, and that when other and more pleasant engagements can be formed, visits, if not visits of convenience, become excessively irksome. This is everybody's way, and of course, therefore, I attach no blame to you that it is yours also. I do not say this with any ill-natured feeling, or in any unkind spirit, but I know that something like this is felt

by others here, and I am really sorry for it, though as I said before by no means surprised that it should be so.

Now, as Saturday is fast approaching I should really be much obliged to you if you will (if you can find the time) write me a word in answer to these two questions. In the first place, do you play the Nobleman? I have the dress and if you are disinclined to play the character I must intrust it to other hands. In the second place, when may I send for your scene, as it requires fitting up, lighting, &c.?

Believe me (in great haste),

Very truly yours,

CHARLES DICKENS

Thus admonished, Kolle made haste to supply his scenery and to perfect himself in the part of the Nobleman. Evidently the amateurs, under young Dickens' management, went into their theatricals quite thoroughly. The letters show how completely absorbed Dickens was in these affairs. He was the organizer and stage director; he played a leading character in each of the three pieces performed; he wrote the "Introductory Prologue," and in all probability was the author of the afterpiece, *Amateurs and Actors*, besides superintending all the details. In later years he frequently demonstrated his great talent for this sort of work as well as for theatrical im-

personation, but it is probable that he never took a more anxious interest in a performance than in this one, when one of his chief motives was to impress Maria Beadnell. The three characters for which he cast himself were designed to show his versatility as an actor. In *Clari* he played a "heavy" part, the heroine's father; in *The Married Bachelor*, he acted a polished man of the world — high comedy; and in *Amateurs and Actors*, a low comedy rôle.

The allusion to "our friend the clerk" in the following note may refer to arrangements for Kolle's marriage which was to occur in the following month.

[April, 1833].

Dear Kolle, — Will you be kind enough to give Henry Bramwell the enclosed 14/ — for cigars, at the same time saying I am much obliged to him. Ask him to be punctual on Monday as I expect an excellent rehearsal, and "Look to yourself." The scenery is progressing at a very rapid rate, the machinery is excellent, the decorations are very good and ditto expensive; and in short the whole affair is in excellent train. I am busy and therefore will not give you the trouble of deciphering any more of my *ilegant* writing.

Believe me, dear Kolle,

Sincerely yours, C. D.

Have you seen our friend the clerk yet? Or have you adopted the other course? No good results yet, I presume.

The Henry Bramwell, to whom the money for cigars was sent, was a young law student, who afterward became a Judge and a Peer of the Realm. He was a member of the cast of *Clari*, assuming the character of the Duke Vivaldi. The performance was given and it may be assumed that Dickens covered himself with amateur glory. Maria Beadnell was in the audience; but the only effect that the affair had upon her was to create additional coldness on account of Dickens' attentions to Marianne Leigh. He declares that, on that evening, he "could not get rid of her." As Miss Leigh and Maria were intimate friends, this statement of Dickens means one of two things: either Miss Leigh was in love with him, as Professor Baker thinks, or her persistence in putting herself in his way was prearranged by the two girls in order that Maria might have a definite cause for ridding herself of him. There is at least one good reason for believing, with Professor Baker, that Marianne Leigh was in love with Dickens. It is that she, apparently, was a much cleverer girl than

Maria. A clever girl would be quick to appreciate the unusual qualities of a young man like Dickens and his superiority to other youths, while an unintelligent woman (such as Maria Beadnell appears in both the pen portraits afterward made of her by Dickens) would have been merely bored by him. In *The Bill of Fare*, Miss Leigh is described as "a fine *roasting* Jack; a patent one, too — never wants winding up." Does not this indicate that Dickens' dislike for the young woman antedated by two years her mischief-making in his love affair? And may she not have loved him the more because she felt that her case was hopeless on account of his preference for her girl friend?

Subsequent to the dramatic performance, April 27th, 1833, Dickens met Miss Beadnell, and it is evident that she reproached him for his interest in Marianne Leigh. She afterward repeated her charges in a letter and Dickens wrote denying Miss Leigh's interference. Kolle at this time was busily preparing for his wedding which had been announced for May 21st. The second letter to Maria, on page 48 of the Dickens-Beadnell correspondence, written on a Tuesday afternoon, was

probably sent May 14th. Dickens and Kolle had discussed the increasing coldness of Maria Beadnell and the mischievous part played by Miss Leigh. Again Kolle played the confidant and go-between. The letter to Maria asking her consent to Dickens writing to Miss Leigh was sent to Kolle with the following note:—

My dear Kolle, — On reflection it appeared to me that as Miss Beadnell is a party concerned and as Marianne Leigh's malice in the event of my writing might be directed against her, I have thought it best to ask her consent to my writing at all, which I have done in the enclosed note. You know how I feel upon the subject, and how anxious I naturally am, and I am sure, therefore, you will do all you can for me when I say that I want it delivered immediately. I have lost too much time already.

Believe me, my dear Kolle,

Faithfully yours, C. D.

Tuesday evening [May 14, 1833].

Although Dickens was properly punctilious in asking Miss Beadnell's permission to write his resentful letter to Marianne Leigh, it is quite certain that he was glad enough to have this excuse to write to his chilly and silly Maria. Write he did, and her reply — judging from his next letter — reiterated charges of conspiracy against her by Dickens and her imaginary rival. However, her feminine curi-

osity was strong enough to cause her to admit that she would like to see the letter he intended writing to Marianne. On the following evening, therefore, Dickens called at Kolle's house with a letter for Miss Beadnell enclosing the scornful epistle to Miss Leigh. Of the latter the artless Maria was careful to keep a copy which she made, and which appears in the Dickens-Beadnell volume. The letter was sent to Miss Leigh and, as it must have effectually cured her of any affection she may have had for Dickens, it is likely that the two girls lost no time in meeting for a chat and a good laugh over the affair which Dickens regarded as a tragedy that wrecked his life.

Kolle was the bearer of Dickens' last appeal to Maria Beadnell. This letter was written May 19, 1833, the Sunday immediately preceding Kolle's marriage. The following note to Kolle was, of course, written on the same day, and the letter to Maria sent with it to be delivered to her when Kolle made his Sunday evening call upon his betrothed.

My dear Kolle, — I enclose a very conciliatory note. Sans pride, Sans Reserve, Sans anything but an evident wish to be reconciled, which I shall be most obliged by your delivering.

Independently of the numerous advantages of your marriage you will have this great consolation, that you will be for once and for aye relieved from these most troublesome commissions. I leave the note myself, hoping that it is possible, though not probable, that it may catch you so as to be delivered today.

By the by, if I had many friends in the habit of marrying, which friends had brothers who possessed an extensive assortment of choice hock, I should be dead in no time.

Yesterday I felt like a maniac, today my interior resembles a lime basket.

Truly yours, C. D.

Sunday [May 19, 1833].

The last two paragraphs refer to a bachelors' supper given on the evening of May 17th. Dickens apparently drank more than was good for him. He was always fond of the liquid good things in life, and on this occasion, apart from the ordinary temptations of a festive gathering of young men, there doubtless was in his mind a recklessness born of despondency. He compared Kolle's "most blest condition" with the unhappy termination of his own love affair, and he drank to forget — enough to make him feel "like a maniac" the next day and very uncomfortable on the second day after.

In his note to Kolle, Dickens accurately de-

scribes his letter to Miss Beadnell. It is one that would touch the heart of any girl worth the winning; but Maria Beadnell's little mind was made up. If she had ever cared for Dickens, she had outgrown all fondness for him. As he said in one of his later letters, when Dora became Flora, "you answered me coldly and reproachfully, and so I went my way." This cold and reproachful answer she gave to Kolle to deliver to Dickens, and the final dismissal was received by the unhappy lover on the next day. Even now he did not "go his way" without another appeal or a last word of some sort. For on the following day he sent another letter for Kolle to give to Maria. —

Tuesday [May 21st, 1833].

My dear Kolle, — "Least said soonest mended." I am very very much obliged to you for performing my commission in the midst of your multifarious concerns so kindly and punctually. May I trouble you with another? by way, of course, of evincing my gratitude.

I shall be at my post in Addle street at 10:00 tomorrow.

Faithfully yours,

CHARLES DICKENS

TO HENRY KOLLE, ESQ.,
14 Addle Street, Aldermanbury.

This last letter was not kept with her other trophies by Miss Beadnell. It was so unusual for her to overlook anything gratifying to her girlish vanity, that one is tempted to believe that the letter never reached her. Kolle was to be married the next day. It is quite possible that he forgot to deliver his friend's note; or he may have suppressed it, believing, more consistently than Dickens, "least said soonest mended."

The last paragraph in the note to Kolle refers to his wedding, which occurred the following day. Dickens was Kolle's best man, and the being "at his post in Addle street" refers to his calling for the bridegroom at the latter's house, No. 14 Addle street.

Thus ended Dickens' first and, as far as known, his only real love affair. His subsequent courtship and marriage seem to have been quite free from the element of poetic sentiment. He himself wrote to Maria in 1855: "Whatever of fancy, romance, energy, passion, aspiration and determination belong to me, I never have separated and never shall separate from the hard-hearted little woman — you." That he had at the time of his marriage

an honest and manly affection for the lady whom he made his wife is beyond question. Mr. Chesterton thinks that Dickens fell in love with all three of the Hogarth sisters; but there is in the known letters to Miss Catherine Hogarth nothing of the passionate adoration that was lavished upon his first love. Mary Hogarth was his ideal of all that is adorable in girlhood. His devotion to her and his grief for her early death were among the most enduring passions of his life. His relations with Georgina Hogarth were those of an ennobling friendship. Instead of having fallen in love with all three of the sisters, as Mr. Chesterton suggests, it is more likely that Dickens fell in love with none of them.

The following note to Miss Catherine Hogarth, written at some time in 1835, is in the collection of the present writer and is now first printed. While its tone is affectionate, it has none of the fervor of the Beadnell letters and, in fact, shows a greater enthusiasm for books and his work than for his *fiancée*. A man whose letters to friends are always so affectionate could hardly have written more conventionally to the young woman he was on the point of marrying. —

FURNIVAL'S INN,
Thursday Night.

My dearest Katie — It is nearly eight, and I have not yet even begun the Sketch; neither have I thought of a subject. Excuse the brevity of this note on that account and believe that it is only occasioned by my wish to see you as early as possible tomorrow.

I send you by George (who in Fred's absence on business, is kind enough to be the bearer of this) the volume which contains the Life of Savage. I have turned down the leaf. Now *do* read it attentively; if you do, I know from your excellent understanding you will be delighted. If you slur it, you will think it dry. I have written to Macrone for Rookwood; and shall have it tomorrow, I doubt not.

Give my best love to your mamma and Mary. *Write* me word how all is going on.

Ever yours, my dearest love,

CHARLES DICKENS

With this is a wrapper addressed "Miss Hogarth. Favored by George Hogarth, Esq." The letter was given by Mrs. Perugini (Kate Dickens) to George Augustus Sala who has endorsed it, "Precious Dickens letter to his wife before their marriage."

Professor Baker finds it difficult to understand Maria Beadnell's treatment of Dickens. It may be accounted for by the fact that she did not have intelligence enough to appreciate

him nor heart enough to respond to a genuine passion. Miss Beadnell was Flora Finching at forty-five or so. At twenty she was the same Flora, excepting that she had the charm of Dora's youthful prettiness. What Dickens saw in her to fall desperately in love with would be a greater mystery, were it not for the fact that the cleverest men have never been proof against the fascinations of the silliest women. "If ye have charm," says Maggie Wiley in Mr. Barrie's play, "it does not much matter what else ye have." And it must be remembered that Dickens was only eighteen when his infatuation began, and a little more than twenty-one when he received his ultimate dismissal.

One cannot avoid thinking what a blessing in disguise Flora's refusal was. As an ideal, a lost love, she was a source of inspiration in the work of the novelist, and when she reappeared in his life she was a figure for a comedy; but, as a wife, it would seem that she would have been the last woman in the world to have made Dickens happy. Poor soul! She was wretched enough in her regrets in later years. She is only remembered as the woman who jilted Dickens, even as

Venables is remembered as the man who, as a school-boy, broke the nose of Thackeray.

One service Maria Beadnell did for Dickens and for all mankind. Her treatment of him stimulated his ambition and made him plunge into work, determined to make a name for himself. It was during the next few months that Dickens began to aspire to a class of work more satisfying and remunerative than the drudgery of the reporters' gallery. He has told us, through the medium of his biographer, that his notion of becoming an actor was suggested only by the idea that the stage would be the source of a good income. Then, as he says, he "made a great splash in the Gallery" and the theatrical ambitions were abandoned.

It was at this time that he began to try his hand at small forms of fiction. This is a natural progression from the descriptive work of a reporter. It is a step that has been made by many writers, but never so quickly and with such complete success as by Dickens. The novelist has described his dropping his first *Sketch* "into a dark letter-box in a dark office up a dark court in Fleet street." He had told of his agitation when this first article

appeared in all the glory of print. "On which occasion I walked down to Westminster Hall, and turned into it for half an hour, because my eyes were so dimmed by joy and pride that they could not bear the street and were not fit to be seen there."

What then was this first attempt that brought first fear and trembling and then tears of joy to the young enthusiast? To the lovers of Dickens, it is a matter of distinct interest. Mr. Forster in the *Life* states that the first of the *Sketches by Boz* to appear was "not *Mr. Minns and His Cousin*, as he (Dickens) thought, but *Mrs. Joseph Porter over the Way*." The biographer says: "In the January number for 1834 of what was then called the *Old Monthly Magazine*, his first published piece of writing had seen the light." In this statement Mr. Forster was in error upon a point of some importance. The next letter to Kolle proves that the "first published piece of writing" was not the one stated by the biographer, but the one identified in Dickens' own recollection. Moreover, it appeared not in January, 1834, but in December, 1833. It is characteristic of Forster — who lives in the cabman's description of him as "a h'arbitrary gent" — that he

claims a more exact knowledge than Dickens of the latter's first published writing, and then proceeds to identify the wrong work and the incorrect date.

A Dinner at Poplar Walk may be found in the *Monthly Magazine* for December, 1833, by any person of an investigating turn of mind, whether a biographer or otherwise. In the collected *Sketches* the title is changed to *Mr. Minns and His Cousin*. Here is Dickens' letter written with a certain pride of authorship; yet in diffidence withal and the hope that his Dora's sister will approve — and perhaps send the magazine to Dora.

BENTINCK STREET,
Tuesday morning.

My dear Kolle, — I intend with the gracious permission of yourself and spouse to look in upon you some evening this week. I do not write you, however, for the purpose of ceremoniously making this important announcement, but to beg Mrs. K.'s criticism of a little paper of mine (the first of a series) in the *Monthly* (not the *New Monthly Magazine*) of this month. I have n't a copy to send, but if the number falls in your way, look for the article. It is the same that you saw lying on my table, but the name is transmogrified from *A Sunday out of Town* to *A Dinner at Poplar Walk*. Knowing the interest (or thinking I know the interest)

Bentinck Street
Tuesday Morning

My dear Rolle

I intend with the gracious permission of yourself and Spouse to look in upon you some lieing this week. I do not write to you however for the purpose of ceremoniously making this important announcement but to beg Mrs K's criticism of a little paper of mine (the first of a series) in the Monthly (not

the new Knickerbocker Magazine
of this month. I haven't
a copy to send but if the
hunter fates in your way
look for the Article. It is
the same that you saw
lying on my Table but
the name is transmogri=
fied from "A Sunday
out of town" to "A
dinner at Poplar Walk"
Knowing the
interest you think in
I know the interest
you are kind enough
to take in my

movements I have
the vanity to make
this communication
Best Remembrances to Mrs
"So no more at present"
from

My dear Hollis
Yours Sincerely
Charles Dickens

I am so dreadfully nervous,
that my hand shakes to
such an extent as to prevent
my writing a word legibly

you are kind enough to take in my movements, I have the vanity to make this communication.

Best remembrances to Mrs. K. "So no more at present" from, my dear Kolle,

Yours sincerely,

CHARLES DICKENS

I am so dreadfully nervous that my hand shakes to such an extent as to prevent my writing a word legibly.

Dickens lost no time in writing this letter to his intimate friend. It was the shortest way of conveying the news to the Beadnell family that Charley Dickens had become an author. We may be sure that one of the chief causes of his exultation was his knowledge that Maria Beadnell would be impressed. When he wrote to Kolle there was still upon him the agitation which caused him to turn into Westminster Hall because his eyes were not fit to be seen in the street. There was good cause for his emotion; better than he realized; for Charles Dickens had found himself. Still "in the brave days when we are twenty-one" he had arrived. He knew now what was to be his life work, though he had no idea that in a little more than two years he would be the most popular author in England.

It is probable that in choosing the form for

first essays in literature, Dickens was influenced by Wight's *Mornings at Bow Street*. These sketches first appeared in a newspaper, the *Morning Herald*. They proved so popular that in 1824 they were published in book form with illustrations by George Cruikshank, some of the best of his small engravings. Three years later, a second series was published, likewise with Cruikshank illustrations. The *Sketches by Boz* were also published in newspapers and magazines; were collected in book form, illustrated by Cruikshank, and appeared in a second series. The subject matter is similar, — scenes from London life, — and the humor and style have considerable resemblance. The essential difference is that Dickens' subjects are general while Wight's are confined to humorous incidents in the police courts.

The arrangement of the *Sketches* in book form gives no idea of the order of their composition and of their publication in the magazine. *Mrs. Joseph Porter over the Way* was the second, appearing in January, 1834. The subject of this sketch is an amateur theatrical performance, and the mischief-making gossip, Mrs. Porter, may be considered a pen portrait of Mrs. John Porter Leigh who in the *Bill of*

Fare is described as "a curry, hot, biting, and smart." *Horatio Sparkins* was published in February, 1834, *The Bloomsbury Christening* in April, and *The Boarding House* in May. As the following letter refers to *The Boarding House* as being in the hands of the publisher, and as likely to be returned — probably in proof — this letter was written a short time before the appearance of the magazine for May, 1834.

BENTINCK STREET,
Monday evening [March or April, 1834].

My dear Kolle, — As neither you nor yours have the most remote connection with *The Boarding House* of which I am the proprietor, I cannot have the least objection to (indeed I shall be flattered by) your perusing it. It is, however, in the hands of the publisher; when they return it to me you shall have it.

I am much obliged to you for purchasing the lottery ticket. I shall call for an hour very soon, when I will kill two birds with one stone and pay you for the "wentur," besides bringing the *O'Thello*. I think if we win we had better sacrifice the discount and take ready money, unless indeed you prefer gold bar. I see by the announcement in the different lottery office windows that the lucky purchaser of a ticket may have the value in "money or free-hold houses." Suppose we have ten pound worth of free-hold houses; of course this will afford a small street. I'll have one side of the way and you shall have the

other. I shall improve my property by the erection of brass knockers and patent water-closets.

Give my love to Mrs. K., and believe me, my dear Kolle,

Sincerely yours,

CHARLES DICKENS

HENRY KOLLE, ESQ.

The burlesque *O'Thello*, according to Mr. Kitton, was written in 1833. It is rather curious that a performance of *Othello* is given by the amateurs in the sketch *Mrs. Joseph Porter over the Way*, a production that the disagreeable Mrs. Porter (? Mrs. Leigh) triumphantly tells everybody was a complete failure. In this play, a prominent rôle was assigned to the author's father, John Dickens, who appeared in the character of "The Great Unpaid." There was certainly some personal allusion in this. Perhaps the elder Dickens had been having difficulty in collecting his salary, or possibly that may have been his excuse to the family for Micawber-like impecuniosity. John Dickens preserved the manuscript of *O'Thello*, and, after his son became famous, gave away separate pages of it as souvenirs. The first page was in the collection of Mr. William Wright and was sold at Sotheby's auction rooms in 1899. On

the margin was the following: "The Great Unpaid was your humble servant, John Dickens. Alphington, 6th June, 1842." Mr. S. Dyer Knott, of Alphington, near Exeter, had another page of this manuscript with John Dickens' endorsement.

It will be seen that, whatever Dickens' relations with the Beadnell family may have been at this time, he continued on terms of intimate friendship with Kolle and his wife. He seems to have set some value upon Kolle's critical opinion and in the following letter makes him the confidant of his literary plans. *The 'Boarding House* referred to in the letter next preceding was the first of the sketches which bore the signature of "Boz," soon to become a household word with the reading public.

This famous pseudonym was probably intended to be pronounced with the "o" long. There is a bit of contemporary verse in which Boz is made to rhyme with "owes." The derivation, too, suggests this. If Dickens adopted it from his own nickname for his brother Augustus, taken from Goldsmith's character of Moses, pronounced through the nose "Bozes!" the next transition would

naturally be to "Boze!" The public, however, adopted the more obvious pronunciation.

It is not generally known that this brother of the novelist came to America under somewhat romantic circumstances. In 1868 he was living in Chicago with a very handsome woman — supposed to be his wife — and two beautiful children. When Dickens visited America in that year, he was announced to give his readings in Chicago. Shortly before the date set, his plans were changed, and it was stated that the health of the novelist would not permit his making so long a journey. The Chicago press resented this and charged Dickens with avoiding that city because he knew that his brother was living there in circumstances which were not particularly affluent. Dickens made answer to this that he was contributing to the support of the only genuine Mrs. Augustus Dickens, who was living in England. A few months later Augustus Dickens died. A short time before the Chicago fire of 1871, the alleged Mrs. Augustus Dickens died and was supposed to have committed suicide. The case attracted considerable attention at the time, partly on account of the great beauty and charm of the

two children. They were adopted by Chicago people. The great fire occurring shortly afterward caused the incident to be forgotten. These details were obtained from a member of the writer's family who at the time was living in Chicago and was well acquainted with the facts.[1] It may be added that not the slightest censure could justly be passed upon Dickens for his conduct in the matter. He was burdened by the claims of a horde of poor relations, and his liberality to them kept him comparatively poor in spite of his large earnings.

The next letter to Kolle must have been written in 1834, as it is sent from Bentinck street. Dickens removed from the house in that thoroughfare December 25, 1834. At the same time, the letter shows that several of the *Sketches* had appeared in the *Monthly Magazine*. The last of these in 1834 was *The Steam Excursion* in the October number. They had attracted sufficient attention to warrant pirate publishers in appropriating

[1] Dr. R. Shelton Mackenzie, in his much criticised *Life of Dickens*, alludes to these events, and states that the second wife of Augustus Dickens was "Miss Bertha Phillips, daughter of Charles Phillips, the eminent Irish orator." Dr. Mackenzie gives the date of Augustus Dickens' death, Christmas Day, 1868.

them for the numerous cheap periodicals that did not make it a practice to pay for contributions. The *Monthly Magazine* had lost some of its popularity, and was not upon a solid financial foundation. However, its new editor, James Grant, agreed to pay half-a-guinea a page, the terms proposed by Dickens for the continuation of the *Sketches*. It is evident that three were paid for at this rate, and then the arrangement proved to be a burden which the magazine could not carry. "Only imagine," wrote Mr. Grant, "Mr. Dickens offering to furnish me with a continuation, for any length of time which I might have named, of his *Sketches by Boz* for eight guineas a sheet, whereas in a little more than six months he could — so great in the interim had his popularity become — have got a hundred guineas a sheet from any of the leading periodicals of the day."

BENTINCK STREET,
Friday morning [1834].

My dear Kolle, — I only returned from my uncle's at Norwood (where I have been busily engaged for a week past, and whither I return again today) late last night. Consequently as they did not forward your note I could

not have the pleasure of seeing you on Friday evening, not knowing of your invitation.

They have done me the honor of selecting my article for insertion in *The Thief*, where you will see it for the small charge of three pence, if you have not yet paid two and six.

I have had a polite and flattering communication from the *Monthly* people requesting more papers, but they are rather backward in coming forward with the needful. I am in treaty with them, however, and if we close, my next paper will be *Private Theatricals*, and my next *London by Night*. I shall then, please God, commence a series of papers (the materials for which I have been noting down for some time past) called *The Parish*. Should they be successful, as publishing is hazardous, I shall cut my proposed novel up into little magazine sketches. Should I not settle into this periodical, I shall try *The Metropolitan*.

As I am not certain how long I shall be detained at Norwood, I cannot say when I can have the pleasure of seeing you. As soon as I return, be it only for a night, however, I shall show myself at Newington, and must take the chance of finding you at home. Business in the shape of masses of papers, plans and prospectusses, and pleasure in the shape of a very nice pair of black eyes call me to Norwood; of course the call is imperative and must be obeyed.

Pray give my love (I may say so I suppose) to Anne and perhaps you will do me the favor of turning over the following request in your mind. When there is a vacancy for a god-father-ship either to a young lady or a young gentleman, for I am not particular, who could

afford to have one poor god-father, will you bear me in mind? Hint this delicately to your "missus."

Believe me, my dear Kolle,

Ever yours sincerely,

CHARLES DICKENS

More nervous than ever.

It is evident from this letter that the publication of the *Sketches* did not follow the order of their composition. *Private Theatres* and *London by Night* were published *after* the series of papers called *The Parish* or *Our Parish*. No doubt Dickens had been making notes, mental or otherwise, for the *Sketches* from the beginning of his experiences as a reporter. Like most beginners in literature, he had on hand a quantity of material from which to select as occasion required. That this was the case with Dickens is shown by the rapidity of his production as soon as opportunity came to him. *Oliver Twist* must have been commenced for serial use in *Bentley's Miscellany* while the writing of *Pickwick* was in progress. In fact, only ten of the twenty monthly parts of *Pickwick* had appeared when, in February, 1837, *Oliver Twist* began its serial course in Bentley's. It seems incredible that even Dickens could have written two of

the most famous novels in literature, supplying serial instalments of both. If he did so, he accomplished a feat which he never attempted after he became a more practiced writer. It is not unreasonable to suppose that *Oliver Twist* was written, in part at least, before *Pickwick*. In the series of sketches called *Our Parish* may be found the germ of the former. Bumble is present in all his glory, and there are many indications that Oliver and his associates were in process of evolution. It is true that in the letter the author speaks of *The Parish* and "my proposed novel" as two distinct works; but this does not disprove that *Oliver Twist, or the Parish Boy's Progress* was in some manner connected with the *Parish* sketches. It is possible, however, that "my proposed novel" may have been *Gabriel Vardon, the Locksmith of London*.

That Dickens ever projected such a work is known only from the fact that it was advertised by Macrone in 1836 as a new novel by the author of *Sketches by Boz*. It was Macrone who published the *Sketches* in book form. He continued to advertise *Gabriel Vardon* till 1837, when his failure in business put a stop to the plans for its publication. This is an in-

teresting suggestion, for it is practically certain that *Gabriel Vardon* was the precursor of *Barnaby Rudge*. The connection is not merely one of names. We know how a name invented or observed would haunt Dickens. Balzac had the same peculiarity. But the *Gabriel Vardon* advertised in 1836, and possibly referred to in the foregoing letter of 1834, was a novel dealing with events during the Gordon riots. Mr. Kitton discovered that the name of Gabriel Varden — spelled with an "e," as in Barnaby Rudge — is in the London directory for 1780, the year of the riots. But there is more definite evidence. The present writer has in his collection a pamphlet (without covers, but with Dickens' book label attached) the title of which is "A plain and Succinct Narrative of the Late Riots and Disturbances. . . . With an account of the Commitment of Lord George Gordon to the Tower, and anecdotes of his Life. London, 1870." In this work the name of Gabriel Varden appears as that of a shop-keeper whose property was damaged by rioters. From the top of the title-page a signature has been cut, probably that of Dickens. The pamphlet certainly belonged to him, as the book label proves. Mar-

ginal notes in pencil are in a hand-writing resembling his. In view of these facts, it seems likely that portions of *Barnaby Rudge* were written before either *Pickwick* or *Oliver Twist*, although the first-named novel did not appear in its final form until after *Nicholas Nickleby* and *The Old Curiosity Shop*.

The foregoing letter to Kolle shows how enthusiastic the young author was in the plans and projects resulting from a fair start in the new career that had opened to him. There is evidence, too, of his recovery from the cruel treatment he had received from Maria Beadnell. In the midst of his routine duties as a newspaper writer and his enthusiasm for his literary work, he finds time for "pleasure in the shape of a very nice pair of black eyes." Who the fair one of Norwood may have been is not to be learned. He doubtless hoped that his interest in this "nice pair of black eyes" might be reported by Mrs. Kolle to her sister, the hard-hearted Maria. That Dickens' friendship for Kolle was as close as before the latter's marriage is shown by the request made at the end of the letter.

The following note, written from Bentinck street, in 1834, indicates that the suggestion in

the last paragraph of the preceding letter may have been adopted. A little Miss Kolle had now appeared upon the scene, and Dickens had been asked to be the child's sponsor in baptism.

BENTINCK STREET,
Friday Evening.

Dear Kolle, — I snatch an instant to say that I shall be at the Ball's Pond Chapel, please God, on Sunday next at half past two precisely.

Believe me,
Truly yours,
CHARLES DICKENS

My duty to your good lady.

The Kolles appear to have lived at Islington at this time. Ball's Pond is in Islington and was so called from the ducking pond of a person named Ball, who conducted a tavern there during the reign of Charles II.

Dickens wrote his earlier sketches and began his preliminary work as a novelist while living with his parents in the Bentinck street house. His home life seems to have been pleasant, though there is in existence an unpublished letter referring to the "damnable shadow" cast by his father. It is impossible to say whether this is an allusion to

the erratic habits of the elder Dickens or to his former experience with the "ban-dogs of the law." Late in 1834, the young writer decided to establish a home of his own, and from Christmas of that year he occupied a "three-pair back" at No. 13 Furnival's Inn, "modest quarters at the top of a steep and dark staircase." He was at this time nearly twenty-three years old and his regular employment was on the reportorial staff of the *Morning Chronicle*. The following letter was probably written early in 1835, —

FURNIVAL'S INN,
Wednesday morning.

My dear Kolle, — As you know of old my excellent good luck in small matters, I think it hardly necessary to say that of course I have received a summons from the office this morning, which will, in all probability, detain me the whole evening and consequently prevent my being able to enjoy the pleasure of your society. This is the first I have had since I returned from the country, and as a matter of course it interferes with the only engagement I had formed.

Now will you turn over in your own mind what evening will suit you best, and just write me a line in the morning in time to prevent my being out, and to enable me to communicate with you in case I should be officially engaged. If you don't do so at once I will be offended.

Give my best love to Henry's Mrs. K., and believe me, dear Kolle,

Sincerely yours,

CHARLES DICKENS

Dickens lived at No. 13 Furnival's Inn for a year. During this time the editorial powers of the *Morning Chronicle* recognized the value of the *Sketches* and increased the writer's stipend by an additional two guineas a week. This enabled him to move to more attractive rooms at No. 15 Furnival's Inn. It has been surmised that these quarters are described in *Martin Chuzzlewit* as John Westlock's apartments. Mr. Kitton has stated that it was at Dickens' rooms at No. 15 Furnival's Inn that Mr. William Hall called, "on a certain memorable day in the early part of 1836," to arrange for the writing of *Pickwick*. There is evidence, however, that this memorable day was in December, 1835. One of the two published letters to Catherine Hogarth informs her of the negotiations with Chapman & Hall, and this is dated 1835. Some time was lost in discussion of the precise character of the projected work. The manuscript of the first monthly part must have been delivered to the publishers about March 1st, and it was prob-

ably written during the month of February, 1836. To the latter date belongs the following letter in the collection of the present writer, and now first printed. Although only a brief note, it is the earliest known Dickens autograph referring to *Pickwick* by name, and in it the author coins a word — "Pickwickian" — which he afterward used so effectively that it has become a part of the language. —

FURNIVAL'S INN,
Thursday Evening.

Dear Sirs, — Pickwick is at length begun in all his might and glory. The first chapter will be ready tomorrow.

I want to publish *The Strange Gentleman.* If you have no objection to doing it, I should be happy to let you have the refusal of it. I need not say that nobody else has seen or heard of it.

Believe me (in Pickwickian haste),
Faithfully yours,
CHARLES DICKENS

MESSRS. CHAPMAN & HALL.

The Strange Gentleman was not performed until September 29th, 1836, at which time six monthly parts of *Pickwick* had appeared. From this letter we learn that it was written before *Pickwick.*

It was while living in his first quarters in

Furnival's Inn that Dickens became friendly with George Hogarth, one of the writers on the *Chronicle* staff. Hogarth's three daughters were destined to play important parts in the life drama of the novelist; one as his ideal of girlhood, the original of some of his most beloved characters; one as his most loyal and devoted woman friend; one as the mother of his nine children, the wife of whom he declared, twenty-five years later, that if they continued to live together they would drive each other insane.

There are no more early letters to Kolle and the probability is that Dickens' intimacy with that friend (and with the social circle in which the Kolle and Beadnell families moved) ceased at about the time he became interested in the Hogarth family. After his sensational success as the author of *Pickwick* Dickens formed friendships with some of the leading writers, artists and actors of the period. These were more congenial to his taste and temperament than the worthy but conventional folk of the Lombard street coterie. Dickens was not the sort of man to allow success to make him ignore old friends; but ambition and a new environment bring different interests and

associates. Twenty-five years passed before Dickens again wrote to his old friend. During that period the novelist created his most famous works. Fame and fortune had done what they could to make him what he had declared in an early letter he could never be, "happy and contented." Kolle had been regarded as a promising young man at a time when Dickens had been considered an ineligible suitor, but it appears that Kolle had not prospered during the quarter of a century which had brought honor and a moderate fortune to his old friend. Kolle must have died poor, for his widow and daughter were glad to obtain a few guineas by the sale of Dickens' autographs. It is inferred from the contents of the following letter that the two old friends had rarely met in the intervening years. Apparently Kolle's letter in 1859 was a voice from the past, like the letter from Maria Beadnell in 1855. Kolle's daughter (perhaps the one for whom Dickens had stood sponsor in baptism in 1835) had literary aspirations and, undeterred by the previous achievements of Voltaire and Southey, had written a poem on the subject of "Joan of Arc." Kolle sent the manuscript to Dickens

either for his personal opinion or as a contribution to the periodical of which the novelist was the editor.

GADSHILL PLACE, HIGHAM BY ROCHESTER, KENT,
Saturday, 18th June, 1859.

Dear Kolle, — It is an extremely difficult thing to pronounce on the qualifications of any writer or anyone aspiring to be a writer, with only one youthful composition to guide the judgment.

I have read Joan of Arc attentively and all I can do is to tell you faithfully what impression it has left upon me. A facility of versification is certainly to be observed in it, though it has very many weak and lame lines; but it seems to me to stop at turning prose into rhyme, and I don't see much good in that. When I say this I mean that I do not find the writer to see the story poetically, or to place any scene in it vividly, through the aid of a bright and picturesque imagination, before the reader.

After laying the piece down I do not remember any thought in it, any fancy, any image, any little touch of description that gives me the least notion connected with the story of which I was not already possessed. I do not believe that the way to success, recompense or happiness in composition lies through such a portal, and unless the writer can do much better, my advice to her is to leave it alone; but she may be able to do better, and considered as an amateur lady-composition, this is very good.

I understand you, however, to wish to know whether this is something beyond such a composition? I think not. In remembrance of the old days to which you so

feelingly refer in your note, and which are no less dear to me, do not hesitate to write to me again on this subject, if you should see reason for doing so, and pray assure your daughter that I am not a dragon, but that I tell her the truth as her father's old friend should.

Faithfully yours,

CHARLES DICKENS

HENRY KOLLE, ESQ.

Six years later other poems by Miss Kolle were sent by her father to Dickens, who then wrote for the last time to his old friend.

GAD'S HILL PLACE,
Tuesday, Dec. 6, 1865.

My dear Kolle, — I have not marked the accompanying copy of your daughter's verses because the little that I have to say about them may be best said generally. They are very musical, very creditable, very good. As editor of a periodical I read many much worse, and many much better. As a composition of a young lady in private life they are interesting and meritorious; but I cannot do such violence to what I believe to be the truth as to encourage a sensitive young creature to enter the public lists so armed. Great disappointment and, consequently, great unhappiness would result from such a rash venture. There may be promise in your daughter not expressed by these verses. Judging her solely by their internal evidence, I find her on a level with hundreds and thousands of unheard-of amateurs. There is a curious expression of conscious weakness in every page but one. The purpose that cannot express itself in words without

italicising them is waited on by a misgiving that it wants force and struggles for expression in vain. If the lines were my own daughter's, I should tell her exactly what I tell you.

When I got to Paris on that occasion to which you refer, I carried out my part of our contract as heartily as I now send all good Christmas wishes to you and yours.

My dear Kolle,

Faithfully yours always,

CHARLES DICKENS

These two letters are striking evidence of Dickens' characteristic honesty, kindness and loyalty. An unwelcome verdict could scarcely be written in terms more considerate. The same frankness and firmness appear in the later letters to Mrs. Winter; and we see revealed in all of them "the good, the gentle, high-gifted, ever-friendly, noble Dickens," as Carlyle said of him, "every inch of him an honest man."

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